

Victorian Studies Association of Ontario



May 2015

1. Outgoing President's Message
2. Panels of Interest to Victorianists at Congress 2015

Outgoing President's Message and Summary of VSAO 2015 Conference

The 48th annual conference of the VSAO, entitled "Race, Place, and Perspective in the Victorian Period," was held at York University's Glendon Campus on April 25th, 2015. We had an exciting, interdisciplinary line-up of talks that ranged across the empire and beyond, and from the early Victorian period to the effect of Victorian legacies on literature today.



Our first speaker was **Dr. Victor Shea**, Associate Professor of English and Humanities at York University. His talk, "'Historical Research and Antiquarian Lore': *Translatio Imperii et Studii*: Race and Place in the Empress of India Debates (1876)," considered debate in parliament and the popular press over the addition of "Empress" to Queen Victoria's title. Against the term's associations of Oriental despotism, Napoleon, and the Ottoman Empire, Disraeli's speech on the bill used the ancient topos of the translation of power and learning to conjure up a symbolic coherence of crown and people transcending race, geography, and history. Dr. Shea situated Disraeli's arguments (which were vigorously attacked, although the bill passed with a conservative majority) in their textual and visual cultural contexts. Our second speaker was **Bassam Chiblak**, a first-year PhD candidate in English at the University of Victoria. His talk, "W. M. Thackeray and F. Walker's *The Adventures of Philip* as

Unionist Propaganda in *Harper's*,” explored the seeming paradox of Thackeray’s racist tale appearing in a pro-Unionist journal at the onset of the Civil War. Looking closely at Frederick Walker’s illustration “Hand in Glove,” which portrays the eponymous Philip and his rival, the Afro-Caribbean Captain Woolcomb, very similarly, Chiblak proposed that it encouraged readers to question Philip’s racist characterisations of Woolcomb and that, in its paratextual and visual cultural context, the illustration suggested that Americans of African and European descent were brothers. **Dr. Winnie Chan**, Associate Professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, gave the final talk of the morning, “Eminent Victorians, Neo-Slave Narratives, and British Heritage.” Dr. Chan’s paper considered recent neo-slave narratives by British authors of Caribbean and African heritage in light of the 2007 centenary of the abolition of the slave trade act. Rather than affirming the patriotic narrative of the British people’s moral conversion to abolitionism and eventual emancipation of the enslaved, novels like Laura Fish’s *Strange Music* (2008), a polyphonic composition which places Elizabeth Barrett’s “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” in the context of her family’s Jamaican holdings and interracial relationships, challenge that narrative and complicate what it means to be British today.

In the afternoon our first keynote speaker was **Dr. Charmaine Nelson**, Associate Professor in the Department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University. Her talk, “James Hakewill, Joseph Kidd, and Isaac Belisario: Representing Jamaica from Slavery to Apprenticeship,” looked at representations of the Jamaican landscape and people under slavery and during the Apprenticeship period. James Hakewill’s *A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica* (1825) offered pastoral visions of sugar cane plantations that erased the labour and surveillance of the enslaved workers, presenting them as insignificant and idle staffage. Dr. Nelson argued that this was a plantation-owner-driven response to the 1807 abolition of the slave trade, an effort to sanitize the violent reality of colonialism. She compellingly demonstrated how post-emancipation illustrative projects from the beginning of Victoria’s reign like Isaac Belisario’s *Sketches of Character* (1837–38) and Joseph Kidd’s *Illustrations of Jamaica* (1838–40) were informed by fears of uprising founded on the 1831 rebellion and the island’s long history of revolt.





Our second keynote speaker was **Dr. Susan Casteras**, Professor of Art History at the University of Washington and previously curator of paintings at the Yale Center for British Art. Her paper, “Seeing America Through a Victorian Lens: British Constructions of Slavery and ‘That Accursed System,’” examined British representations of American slavery from the mid-Victorian period by Eyre Crowe, James Lefevre Cranstone, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, Joseph Noel Paton, William Bromley, Richard Ansdell, and William Gale, among others. Dr. Casteras discussed the main themes of these works, including the auction block, doomed escapes, degraded female victims, interracial unions, and emancipation, and argued that the images largely worked to reinforce a sense of British moral superiority, frequently displaying a disturbing emotional attachment and, in some cases, a downplaying of violence of white abusers and of the agency of black figures. Dr. Casteras’s keynote drew together many of the threads from the other talks, and we ended the day with an enriched understanding of the stakes of the varied strategies used to represent, misrepresent, or avoid representing race in the Victorian period (whether a title, an illustration, a painting, or a novel is at issue), and the legacy those representations have today.

At the annual business meeting we elected the VSAO’s next President, Dr. Tina Choi, Associate Professor of English at York University. Her interdisciplinary research interests include the Victorian novel, 19th-century conceptions of the city, representations of the body, and medical narratives. I’m sure you all join me in welcoming this truly versatile scholar to the helm. We also elected Dr. Suzanne Bailey, Associate Professor in the Department of English Literature at Trent University, to the VSAO Executive as a Member-at-Large. I would like to thank all the speakers and attendees of the conference for making it such a stimulating event. I’d also like to thank everyone for giving me the opportunity to serve as President for the last two years. I wish you all a wonderful summer and look forward to seeing you at next year’s talks and conference.

Alison Syme
Departments of Visual Studies and Art, University of Toronto

Panels of Interest to Victorianists at Congress 2015, University of Ottawa

All are cordially invited to the VSAO-organized panel for the upcoming ACCUTE conference in Ottawa. Please encourage friends and colleagues to attend!

Saturday May 30

3:30-5:00 – S4B Joint Session with the Victorian Studies Association of Ontario (VSAO): Victorian Inheritance – room SMD 330

Organizers and Chairs: Margot Beggs, Katherine Magyarody, and Noa Reich (Toronto)
Christine Choi (Toronto), “The Bridegrooms of Christina Rossetti: Translating the ‘Religion of Love’”

Michael A. Donnelly (Toronto), “Looking Backward – William Morris, News from Nowhere, and the Jurisprudence of Genre”

Susan Slattery (Toronto), “Primogeniture under Pressure: John Singer Sargent’s ‘Duke of Marlborough’”

Jonathan Vantor (York), “‘Margaret the Heiress’: The Inheritance of Tradition in North and South”

The following list of additional panels of interest to our members has been assembled by executive members-at-large, Katherine Magyarody and Noa Reich. A full, searchable program is available at: <http://accute.ca/accute-conference/2015program/>.

Saturday May 30

1:45-3:15 – S3B Joint Session with International Gothic Association (IGA): Gothic Fathers – room SMD 221

Organizer and Chair: Karen Macfarlane (MSVU)?

Luke Maynard (UWO), “‘Numinous Beings Are We’: Dead Hands, Dark Fathers, and the Gothic Materiality of Star Wars”

Rasmus R. Simonsen (UWO), “The Alchemical Confusion of Genealogy and Paternity in Hawthorne’s *The Dolliver Romance*”

Thomas Stuart (UWO), “The Father’s Shadow: Gothic Legacy in Stevenson and Lovecraft”

1:45-3:15 – S3D Writing Bodies/Controlling Minds – room SMD 226

Chair: Heather Meek (Montréal)

Kala B. Hirtle (Dalhousie), “Altered States of Consciousness and Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse in *The Vampyre* and *Carmilla*”

Laura Schechter (Alberta), “‘A membrana on her’: Descriptions of Elizabeth I’s Body and Subversions of Sexual Difference”

Edith Snook (UNB), “Reducing Anatomy to Verse in the Work of Jane Barker”

Sunday May 31

10:30-12:00 – U2G Figures and the Figurative: Rereading the 19th Century – room ART 350

Chair: Anna MacDonald (Ottawa)

D.M.R. Bentley (UWO), “Archibald Lampman’s Writings and Drawings in Episcopon, 1879-1882”

Rebekah Ann Lamb (Our Lady Seat of Wisdom), “Boredom, Everyday Life and ‘Self-Postponement’: Towards an Aesthetics of Duty in Christina Rossetti’s ‘Commonplace’”

Noa Reich (Toronto), “‘Mercenary Plotters’: Inheritance and Speculation in Our Mutual Friend”

Patricia Rigg (Acadia), “Intuition, Genius, and Greece: Euripides in the Italian poetic forms of Augusta Webster and A. Mary F. Robinson”

1:45-3:15 – U3C Joint Session with the North American Victorian Studies Association (NAVSA): Victorian Materialities I – room SMD 221

Organizer and Chair: Lauren Gillingham (Ottawa)

Jason Camlot (Concordia), “The Victorian Scrapbook: Evidence of Material Use”

Fiona Coll (SUNY Oswego), “Materializing the Past in Late-Victorian Novels: A Study in Photographs”

Michelle Weinroth (Ottawa), “Reading Morris Backwards: From the Politics of Kelmscott to the Fictions of Commonweal”

1:45-3:15 – U3F Reading and the Reader – room SMD 227

Chair: Tina Trigg (King’s)

Kai Hainer (Toronto), “‘So As By Fire’: Daniel Deronda, Difficult Reading, and the Discomforts of Deracination”

Sabrina Reed (Mount Royal), “(Auto)Biography and Suicide Survivorship: Miriam Toews’ All My Puny Sorrows”

Genevieve Zimantas (Dalhousie), “Rhys’ Anti-Novels: Into the Literary Void”

Monday, June 1

8:45-10:15 – M1B Joint Session with the North American Victorian Studies Association (NAVSA): Victorian Materialities II – room SMD 221

Organizer and Chair: Lauren Gillingham (Ottawa)

Alanna Bartolini (Concordia), “Dracula’s Private Collection”

Rebecca Jayne Hildebrand (Columbia), “The Ghostly Architectures of Hardy’s The Woodlanders”

Noa Reich (Toronto), “‘Like a Dozen of Spoons’: Materiality and the Substitutive Economy of OMF”

8:45-10:15 – M1C Victorian Horrors – room SMD 222

Chair: Marjorie Stone (Dalhousie)

Madison Bettel (UWO), “‘Evoked Ghosts’: Inherited Masculine Trauma and the Haunted 19th-Century Adventure Literary Tradition”

Aaron Donachuk (Toronto), “Attention-Making at the fin de siècle: Avatars of Attention in the Novels of Robert Louis Stevenson”

Robert Pasquini (McMaster), “Atavistic Futurities: H.G. Wells and the Aesthetics of Extinction”

Julia M. Wright (Dalhousie), “Rewriting the History of Empires: Wilde’s ‘Ruins’ and the Ends of Civility”

Tuesday, June 2

8:45-10:15 – T1C Joint Session with the Victorian Studies Association of Western Canada (VSAWC): Victorian Literary Experiments – room SMD 222

Organizers and Chairs: Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa Surridge (UVic)

Jo Devereux (UWO), “Toy Books: Kate Greenaway, Edmund Evans, and the Cultural Capital of Childhood in the Late Nineteenth Century”

Melanie East (Toronto), “‘The old thing . . . done in a way that is new’: Re-enchanting the ‘Boy’s Story’ in Conrad’s and Ford’s Romance”

Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa Surridge (UVic), “The Law and the Lady and the Experimental Form of Sensation Fiction”

8:45-10:15 – T1F 19th-Century Selves – room SMD 224

Chair: Nahmi Lee (UWO)

Alyson Brickey (Toronto), “Whitman’s ‘First person plural’: Lists in ‘Song of Myself’”

Elissa Gurman (Toronto), “The (Im)possibilities of Female Choice: Sexual Selection in Gissing and James”

Paul Keen (Carleton) and Cynthia Sugars (Ottawa), “Joseph Howe and the Novascotian: Reimagining Literary Authority in Pre-Confederation Canada”

Christine Yao (Cornell), “Atavism as Nostalgia: Science and Affect in Benito Cereno”

8:45-10:15 – T1B Joint Session with the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism (NASSR): Romantic Anarchy/Anarchist Romanticism: Rethinking the Aesthetics and Politics of Romanticism – room SMD 221

Organizer and Chair: Jared McGeough (UWO)

Luke R. J. Maynard (UWO), “‘Heroes of Unwritten Story’: Canadian Spoken Word, Slam Poetry and the Anarchist Legacy of Romanticism”

Christopher Scott Satterwhite (West Florida), “George Dyer and the ‘knowing Rascals’: Romanticism, Anarchism, and the Prison Industrial Complex”

J.A. Weingarten (Concordia), “Anarchical Modernism and the ‘Old Poetry’ in Canadian Literature”

8:45-10:15 – T1E Eco-Emergenc(i)es and the Limits of Darwinian Thought – room SMD 227

Organizer and Chair: David M.J. Carruthers (Queen’s)

Steve Asselin (Queen’s), “The Anxiety of Extinction: Biological Replacement and Post-Human Ecologies”

Ashley Cyr (UBC), “‘Human face worn by animals’: Melancholy Nature and the Extinction of Humanity”

Irene Mangoutas (Queen’s), “‘An infantryman could hardly think about trees’: (Post)Darwinism, Ecology, and the Great War”

Doug Sikkema (Waterloo), “The Edge of Words: Religious Language, Evolution and Marilynne Robinson”

10:30 – 12:00 T2E Religion and Its Others – room SMD 330

Chair: Andrew Connolly (Carleton)

Norah Franklin (Toronto), “Religious and Secular ‘Immobilities’ in Robin Blaser’s The Holy Forest”

Liam Monaghan (Dalhousie), “Drag Queens and Guardian Angels: Queering Christian Love in Tennessee Williams’s Summer and Smoke and The Eccentricities of a Nightingale”
Amanda Paxton (Trent), “The Married Women’s Property Act and the Bride of Christ”

10:30 – 12:00 – T2C – Joint Session with the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism (NASSR): “‘Food for Future Years’: The Future of Wordsworth/Wordsworth’s Futures” – room SMD 221

Organizer and Chair: Jared McGeough (UWO)

Christopher Bundock (Huron), “‘Like a fear to come’: Dislocated Affect in The Prelude”

Joel Faflak (UWO), “Wasted Wordsworth”